

THE STATUS AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL NORMS INTERVENTIONS

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Outline

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- Theoretical Foundations of Social Norm Marketing (SNM) Interventions
- Empirical Validation for SNM
- Two Cases Studies
- Challenges to SNM
- Summary

Social Norms

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Norms connote a system of meanings and attitudes within which individuals interpret a given situation and from which they take direction for their behavior within a particular cultural domain. Research has consistently demonstrated that behavioral choices are related to group norms.

College Drinking and Normative Ambiguity

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Consistent and significant gap between the actual and perceived norms for alcohol use on an undergraduate college campus (Perkins and Berkowitz, 1986).

The Role of Perception in Social Norms Theory

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“This theory holds that if students perceive something to be the norm, they tend to alter their behavior to fit that norm, even if it isn’t reality. So if students think heavy drinking is normal, they’ll drink more. If they think responsible drinking is normal, they’ll drink more responsibly.”

- Michael Haines, NIU

Result of Misperceptions

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The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

- Misperceptions Fuel Heavy Use



- Heavy Use is Interpreted as Normative



- Misperceived Norm is Institutionalized

Social Norm Theory

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- **Assumption:** Students generally misperceive the frequency and quantity of alcohol typically consumed by other students, and, as a result, develop norms that support heavy intoxicant use
- **Action:** Transform the “definition of the situation” supporting heavy intoxicant use through perceptual correction strategies
- **Outcome:** Changing student perceptions of the extent of heavy alcohol use through advertising “actual” campus norms will lead to more moderate drinking practices among students.

Social Norms Research

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- Students typically over-estimate rates of alcohol use on all types of campuses, regardless of actual campus drinking norm (low, moderate, or high – Perkins 2005)
- Misperceptions extend across demographic subpopulations (age, gender, race, geographical location, social status)
- Misperceptions have a strong association with alcohol consumption
- Misperceptions extend beyond the college environment to include the broader community
- Most students believe they drink less than other students: Self-Other Discrepancy
- Perceptions of proximal relationships more influential than distal relationships
- Misperceptions of substance use and other behaviors (gambling, bullying, sex, violence, crime, etc.) are common

SMN Effectiveness – Supporting Evidence

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- Hobart and William Smith Colleges — 32% reduction
- Northern Illinois University — 44% reduction
- Rowan University — 25% reduction
- University of Arizona — 27% reduction
- University of Missouri at Columbia — 21% reduction
- Western Washington University — 20% reduction
- Florida State University (FSU) - 22% reduction
- Michigan State University (MSU) - 26% reduction
 - ▣ **Most prior evaluations of SNM campaigns have involved single-group pretest-posttest comparisons or small-scale quasi-experimental designs**
- Multi-Site study (DeJong et al, 2006) significant but weak results
- “Real World” Study (Johnson 2012) significant reduction but small effect sizes

SNM Effectiveness – Less Positive News

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- Wechsler H, et al *J Stud Alcohol*. 2003; 64:484– 494.
- DeJong et al, *Substance Abuse* 2009; 30:127-140
- Granfield, *Addiction Research and Theory*; 2005; 13: 281-292
- Scribner et al, *J Stud Alcohol and Drugs* 2011; 72: 232-239
- Werch et al, *Journal of American College Health*, 2000; 49, 85–92
- Peeler et al, *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*, 2000; 45, 39–54.

SNM Effectiveness

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□ Challenging College Alcohol Abuse (CCAA)

▣ SAMSHA – Evidence-based Programs

■ QUALITY OF RESEARCH (4 point scale) - Moderate

▣ Reliability of Measures	2.75
▣ Validity of Measures	3.12
▣ Fidelity	2.50
▣ Confounding Variables	1.00
▣ Data Analysis	2.50

Case Studies

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- *“Testing the Social Norms Model to Reduce High Risk College Drinking,”* SAMSHA - 1999 – 2002
 - University of Denver – Treatment (N=1295)
 - Colorado College – Control (N= 650)

- *“An Investigation of the Impact of the Challenging College Alcohol Abuse Intervention at Seven Sites,”* OASAS – 2005-2008 (Total N = 8045)
 - SUNY-Cortland
 - SUNY-Plattsburgh
 - SUNY-Oneonta
 - SUNY-Maritime
 - Mohawk Valley Community College
 - Finger Lakes Community College
 - Rockland Community College

Perceived vs. Actual – Denver Study

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Table 3. Perceived vs. reported frequency of alcohol use among DU students

<u>Frequency of Alcohol Use Past Year</u>	<u>Perceived Use</u>			<u>Reported Use</u>		
	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>
ever	0	.4%	.5%	10.0%	12.8%	10.6%
once per year	.2%	.2%	0	3.5%	6.2%	4.6%
times per year	.2%	.5%	.7%	.4%	7.3%	9.6%
twice a month	2%	1.7%	1.7%	12.6%	9.8%	13.4%
once a week	21%	24.3%	25.2%	25.8%	19.8%	18.0%
times per week	49%	47.9%	43.3%	24.7%	24.8%	27.3%
times per week	18%	18.9%	16.5%	9.1%	9.1%	8.9%
everyday	6%	4.7%	8.5%	0	1.4%	1.9%

Perceived Vs. Actual – SUNY Study

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Participating SUNY Schools perceptions and actual use of alcohol

	<u>Perceptions</u>	<u>Reality</u>
■ Never	2.8 %	13.2%
■ Once Per Year	.4 %	6.9%
■ 6 Times Per Year	.6 %	12.1%
■ Once Month	1.1%	7.3%
■ Twice a Month	2.8 %	13.2%
■ Once Week	24.9 %	22.8%
■ 3 Times Per Week	43.1%	17.1%
■ 5 Times Per Week	12.1%	3.7%
■ Every Day	9.6%	1.1%
	(n=3003)	(n=3003)

Perceived Vs. Actual: Females

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Seven participating SUNY Schools perceptions and actual use of alcohol

	<u>Perceptions</u>	<u>Reality</u>
■ Never	1.5%	12.9%
■ Once Per Year	.2%	7.5%
■ 6 Times Per Year	.3 %	13.6%
■ Once Month	.7%	8.1%
■ Twice a Month	2.9%	14.1%
■ Once Week	23.2%	23.5%
■ 3 Times Per Week	46.5%	16.3%
■ 5 Times Per Week	13.5%	2.9%
■ Every Day	10.5%	.3%
	(n=1819)	(n=1819)

Perceived Vs. Actual: Males

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Seven participating SUNY Schools perceptions and actual use of alcohol

	<u>Perceptions</u>	<u>Reality</u>
■ Never	4.9 %	14.2%
■ Once Per Year	.8 %	6.1%
■ 6 Times Per Year	1.1 %	9.9%
■ Once Month	1.7%	6.3%
■ Twice a Month	2.8 %	12.4%
■ Once Week	28.6 %	22.6%
■ 3 Times Per Week	39.7%	19.2%
■ 5 Times Per Week	10.3%	5.2%
■ Every Day	8.4%	2.4%
	(n=1132)	(n=1132)

Perceived Vs. Actual: Minority vs. Non-Minority

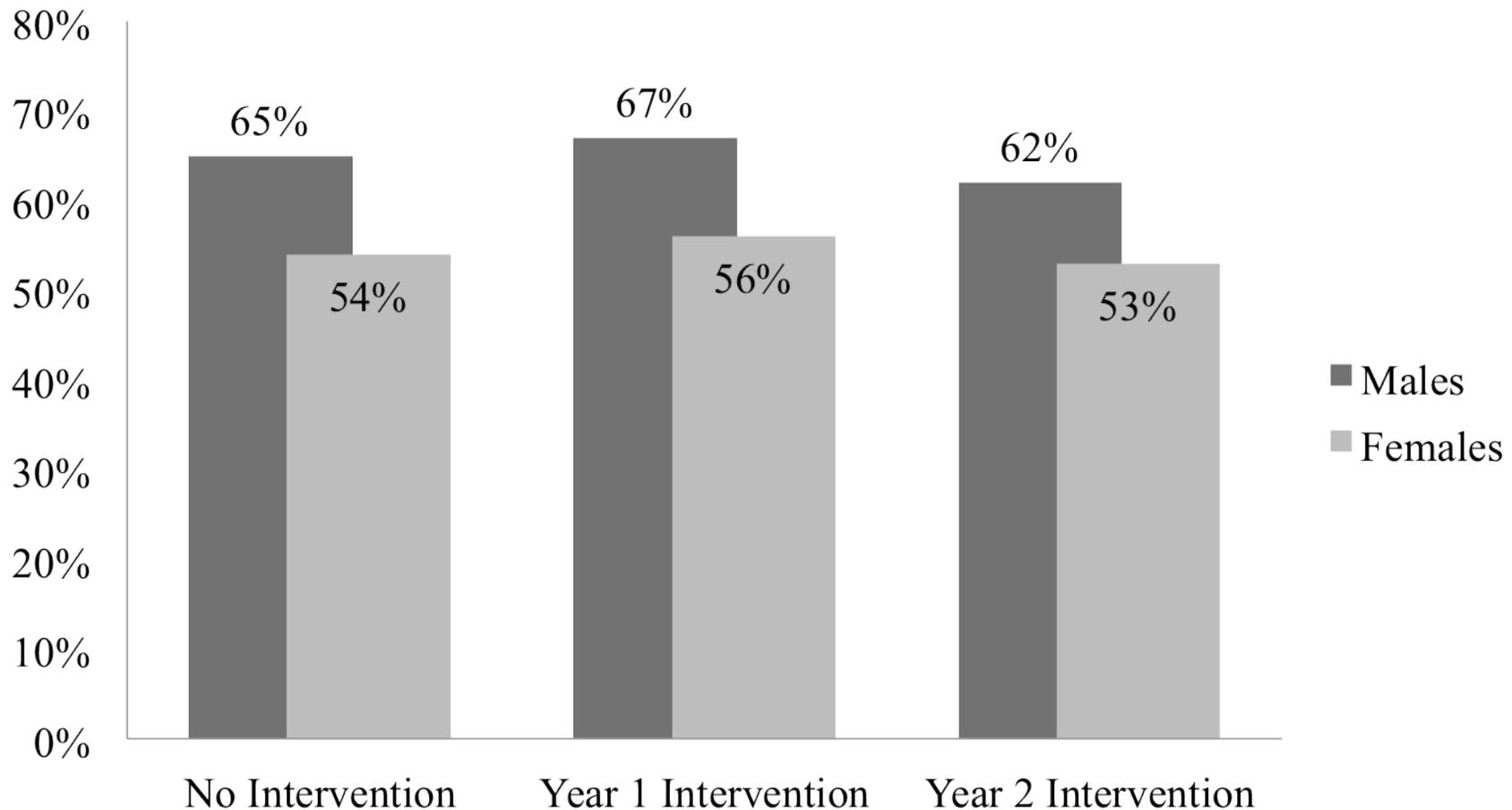
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Seven participating SUNY Schools perceptions and actual use of alcohol

	<u>White</u>		<u>Non-White</u>	
	Perceptions	Reality	Perceptions	Reality
Never	1.9%	11.4%	7.5%	23.4%
Once Per Year	.2%	6.3%	1.7%	10.6%
6 Times Per Year	.6%	11.5%	.8%	15.7%
Once Month	1.1%	7.5%	1.2%	6.6%
Twice a Month	2.8%	13.7%	3.1%	12.2%
Once Week	26.1%	24.8%	21.1%	14.3%
3 Times Per Week	45.1%	19.0%	37.9%	9.7%
5 Times Per Week	12.5%	3.9%	11.4%	3.1%
Every Day	9.1%	1.0%	12.4%	1.7%
NO RESPONSE	.8%	.9%	2.9%	2.7%
	(n=2460)		(n=483)	

Percent Indicating Binge Drinking at Least Once During The Past Two Weeks

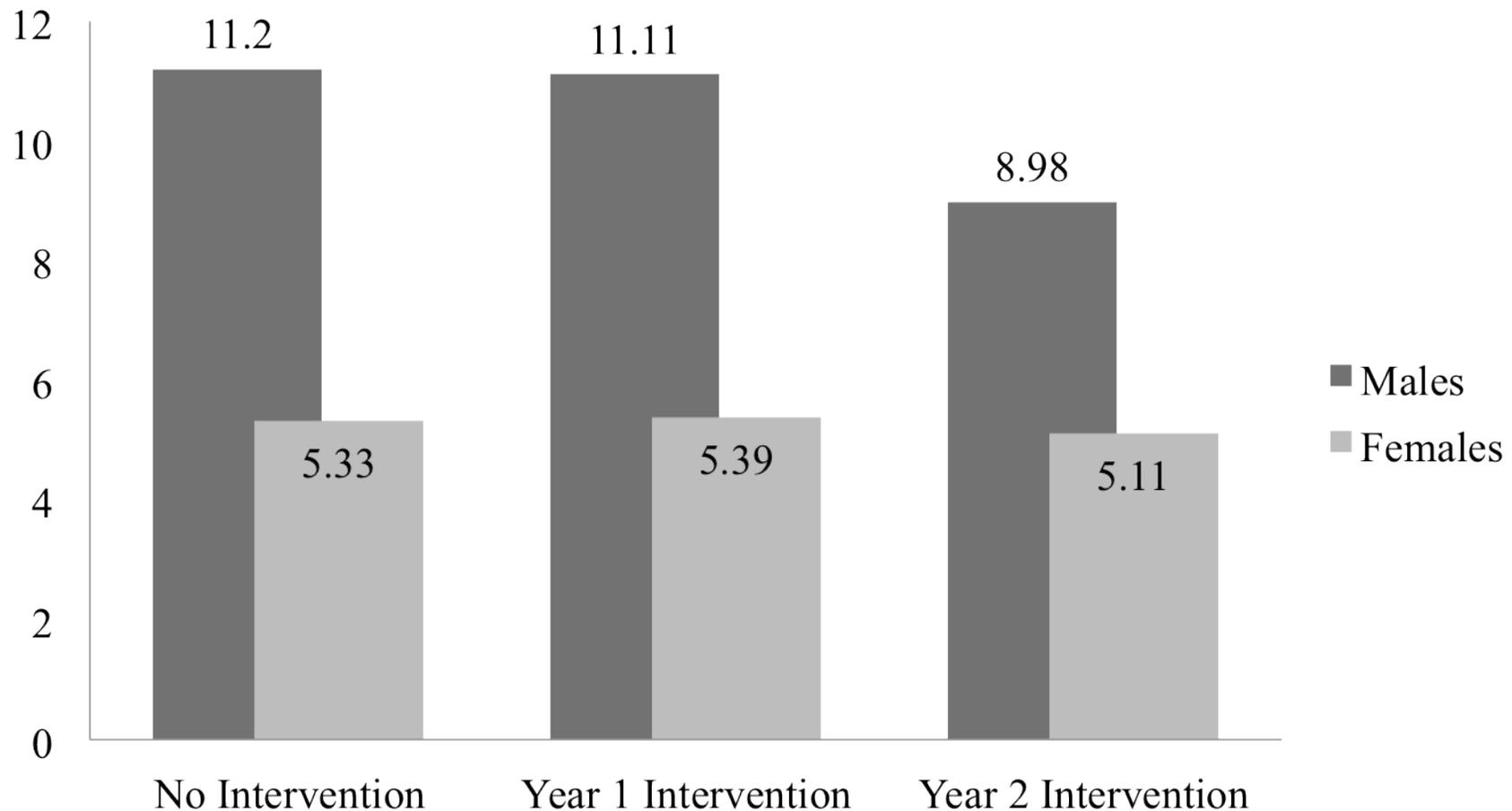
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One-Way ANOVA
Males: $F = 1.36, p = .256$
Females: $F = .938, p = .391$

Average Number of Drinks During a Typical Week

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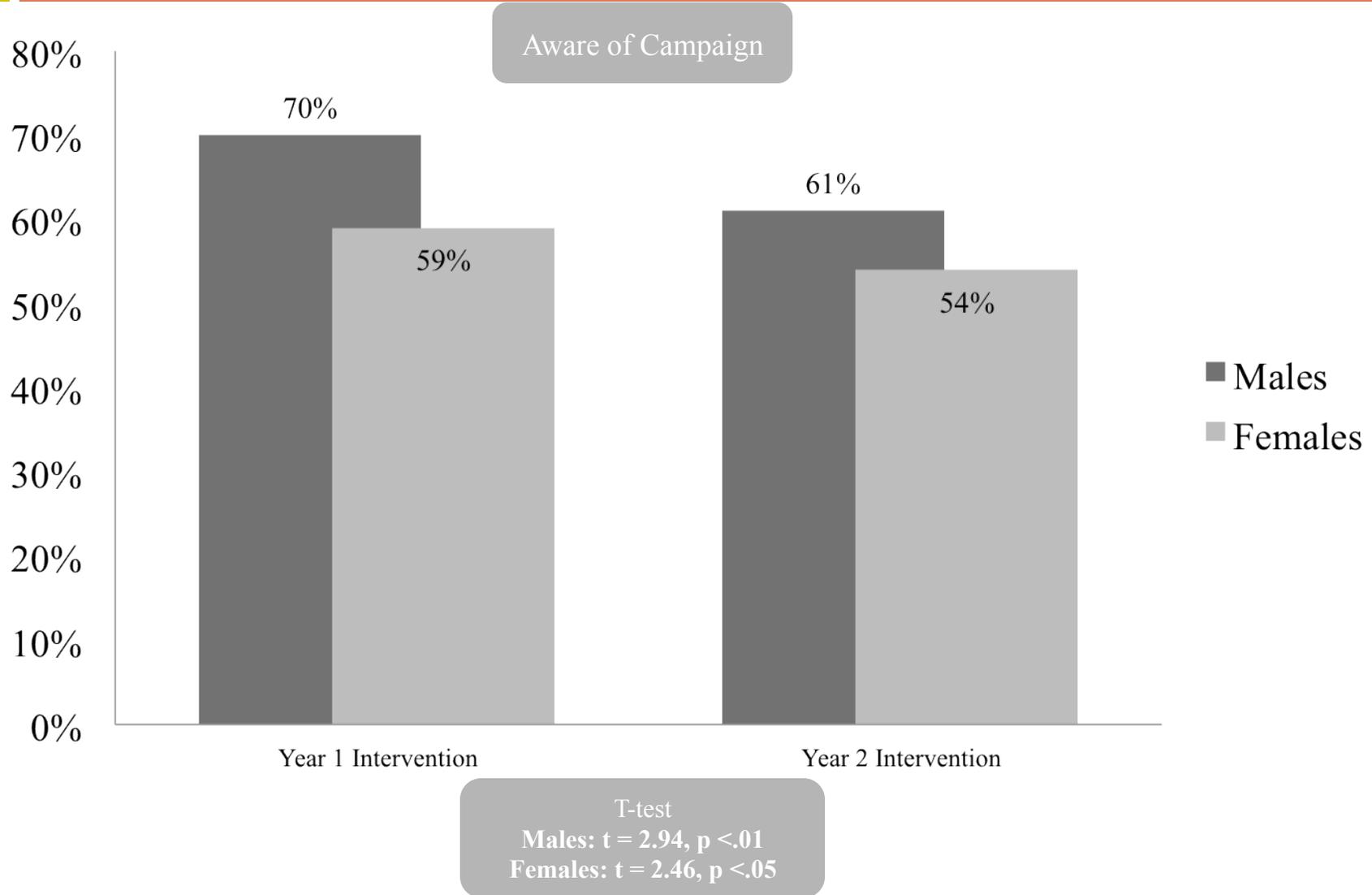


One-Way ANOVA
Males: $F = 3.81, p < .05$
Females: $F = .347, p = .707$

Percent Indicating Binge Drinking at Least Once During The Past Two Weeks

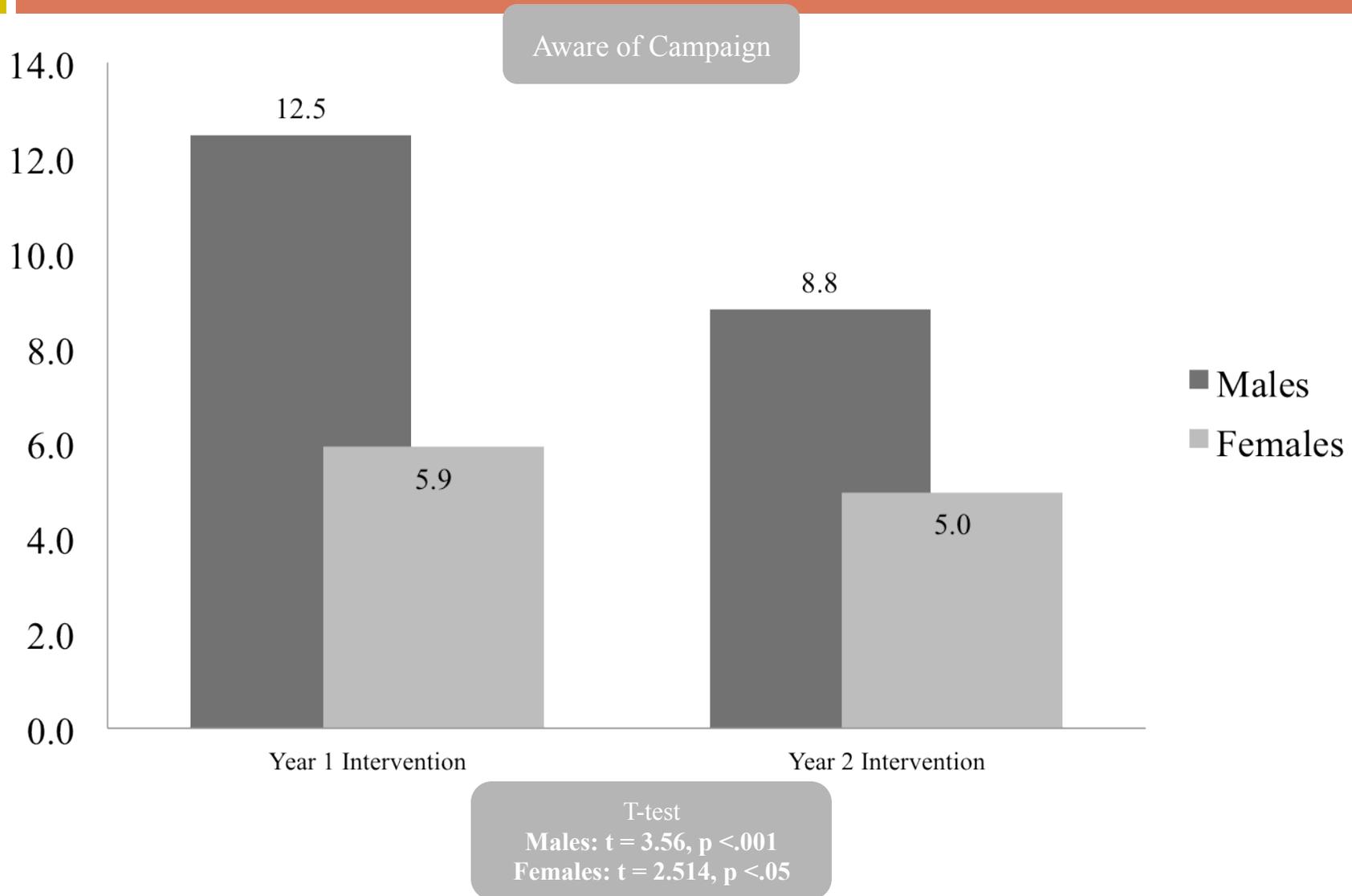


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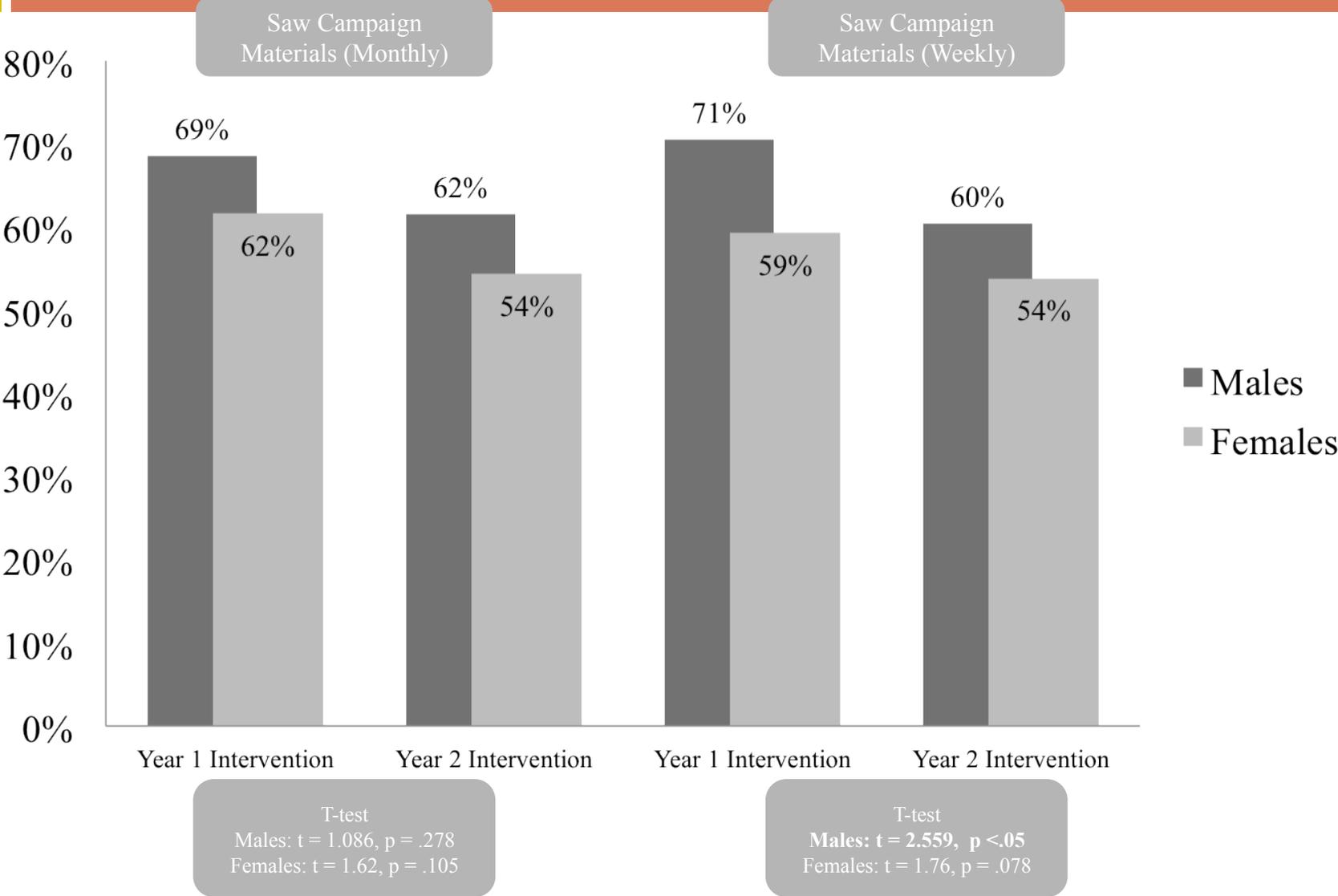


Average Number of Drinks During a Typical Week

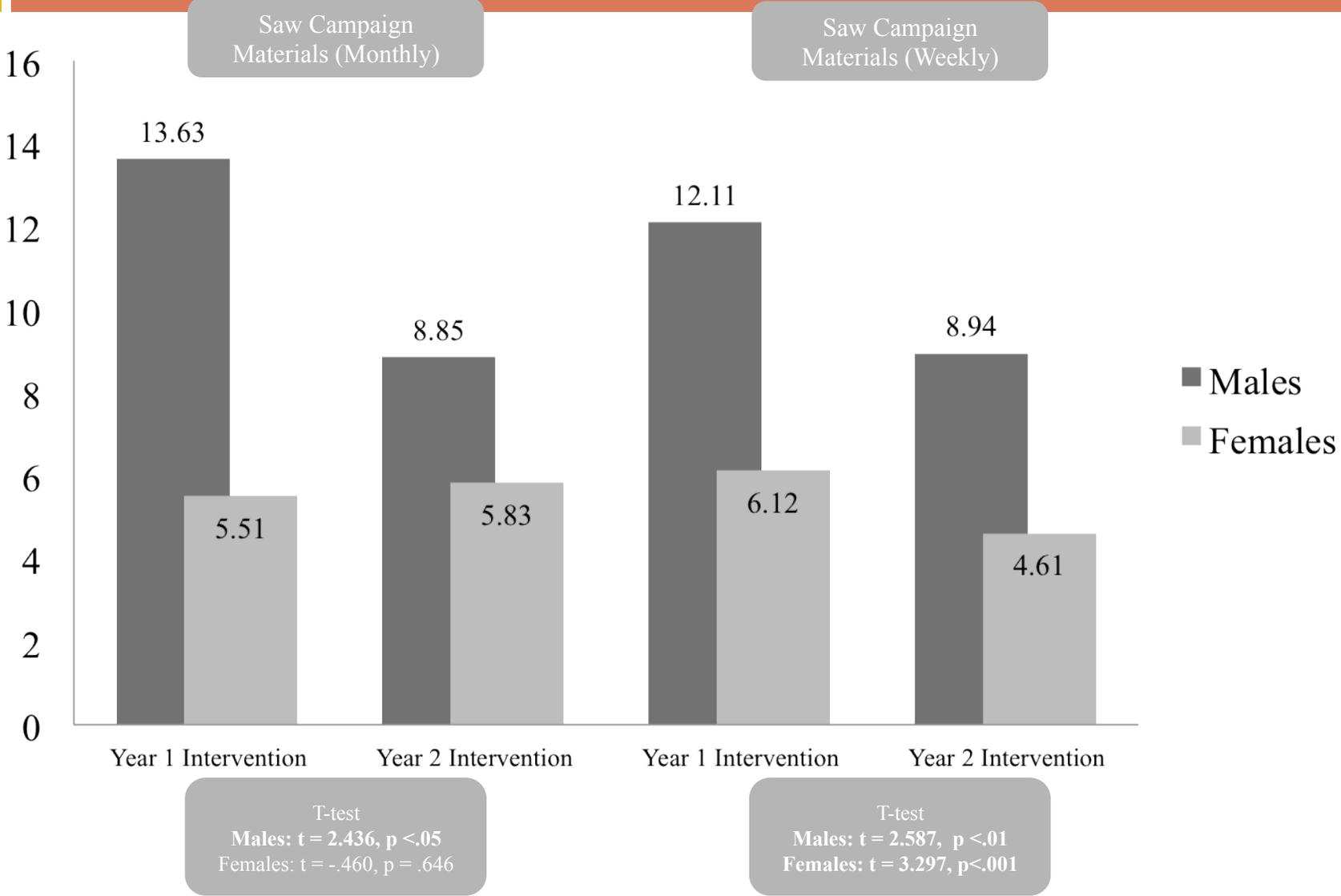
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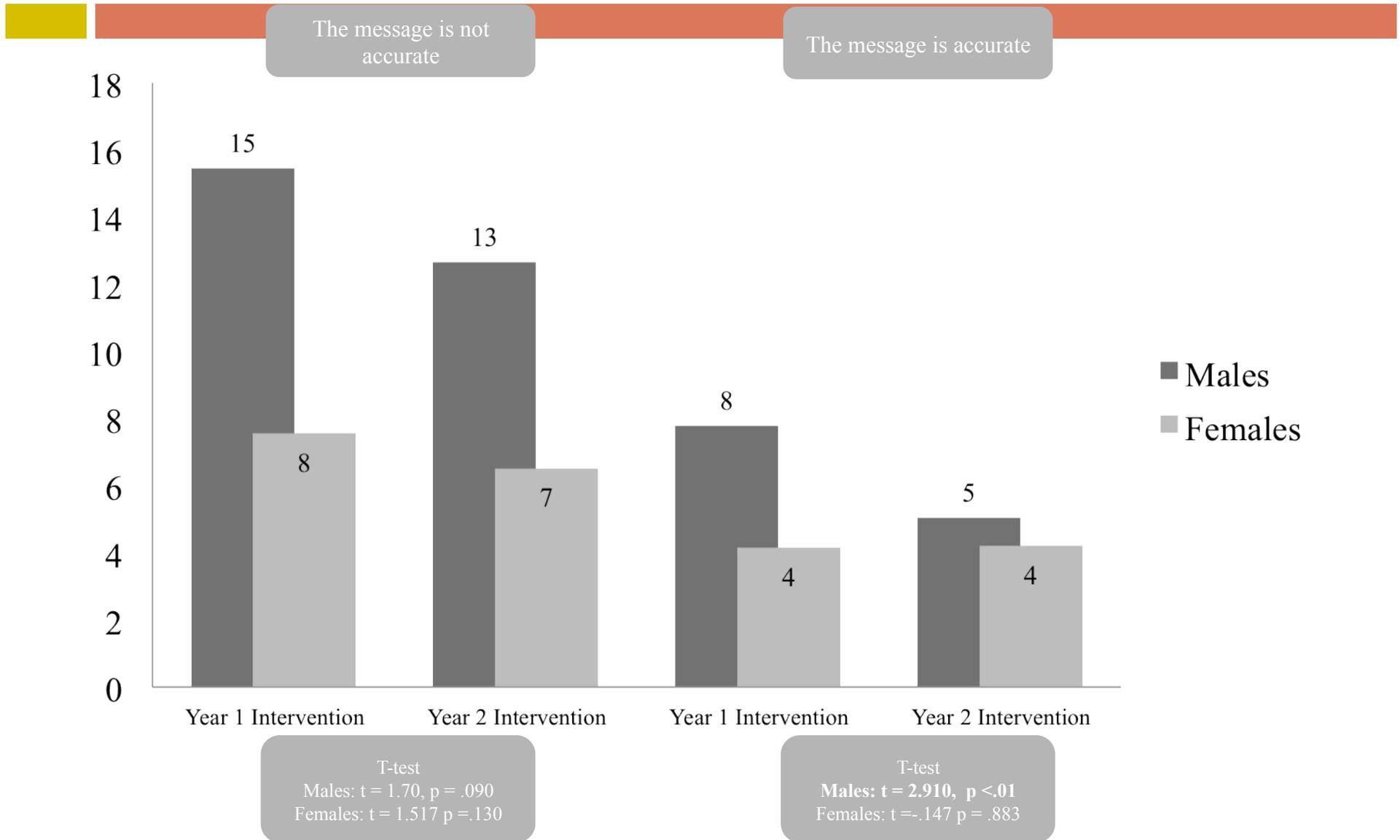
Percent Indicating Binge Drinking at Least Once During The Past Two Weeks



Average Number of Drinks During a Typical Week



Average Number of Drinks During a Typical Week

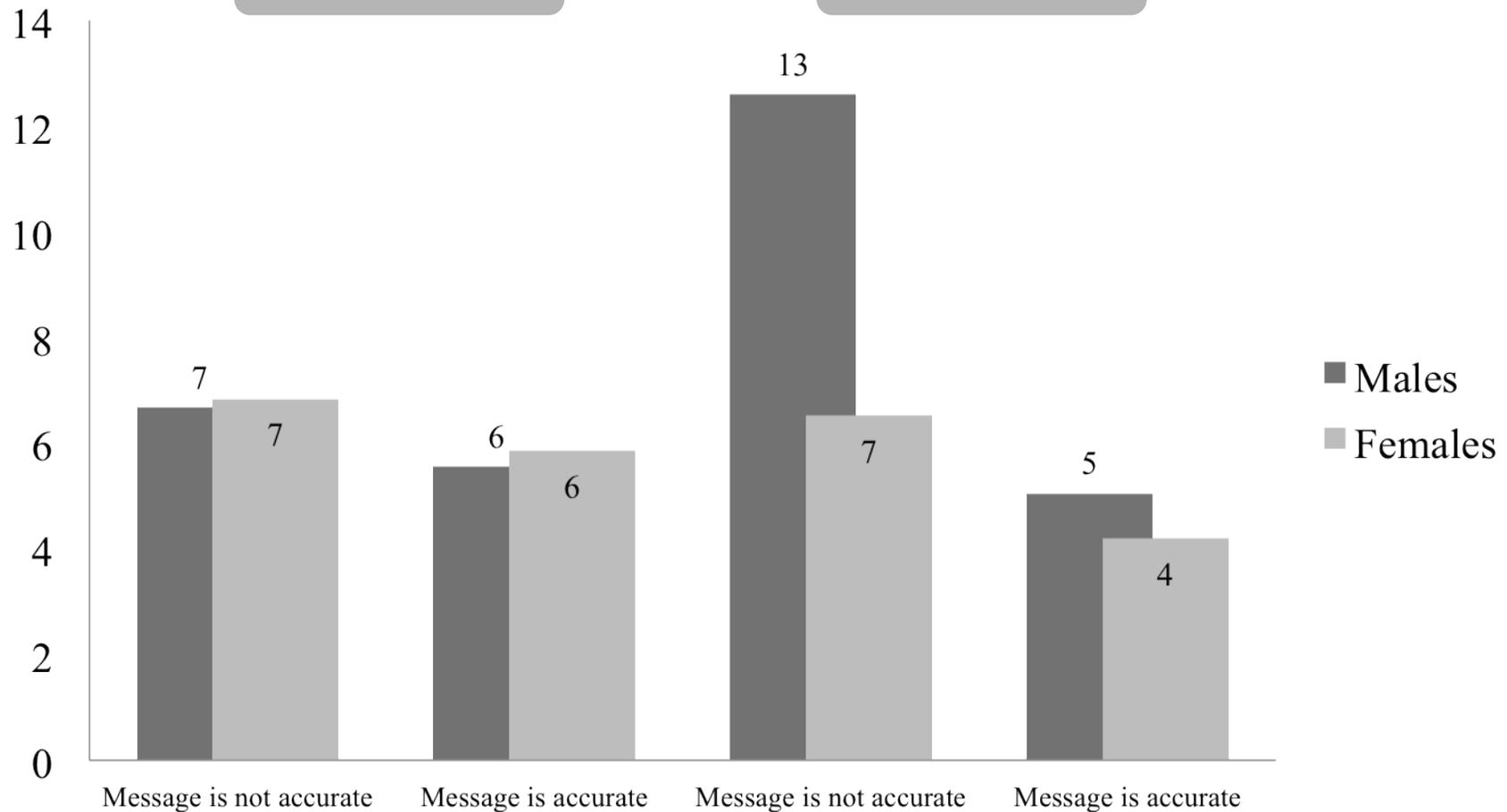


Average Number of Drinks During a Typical Week (Year 2 intervention only): Lower perceptions may not affect use

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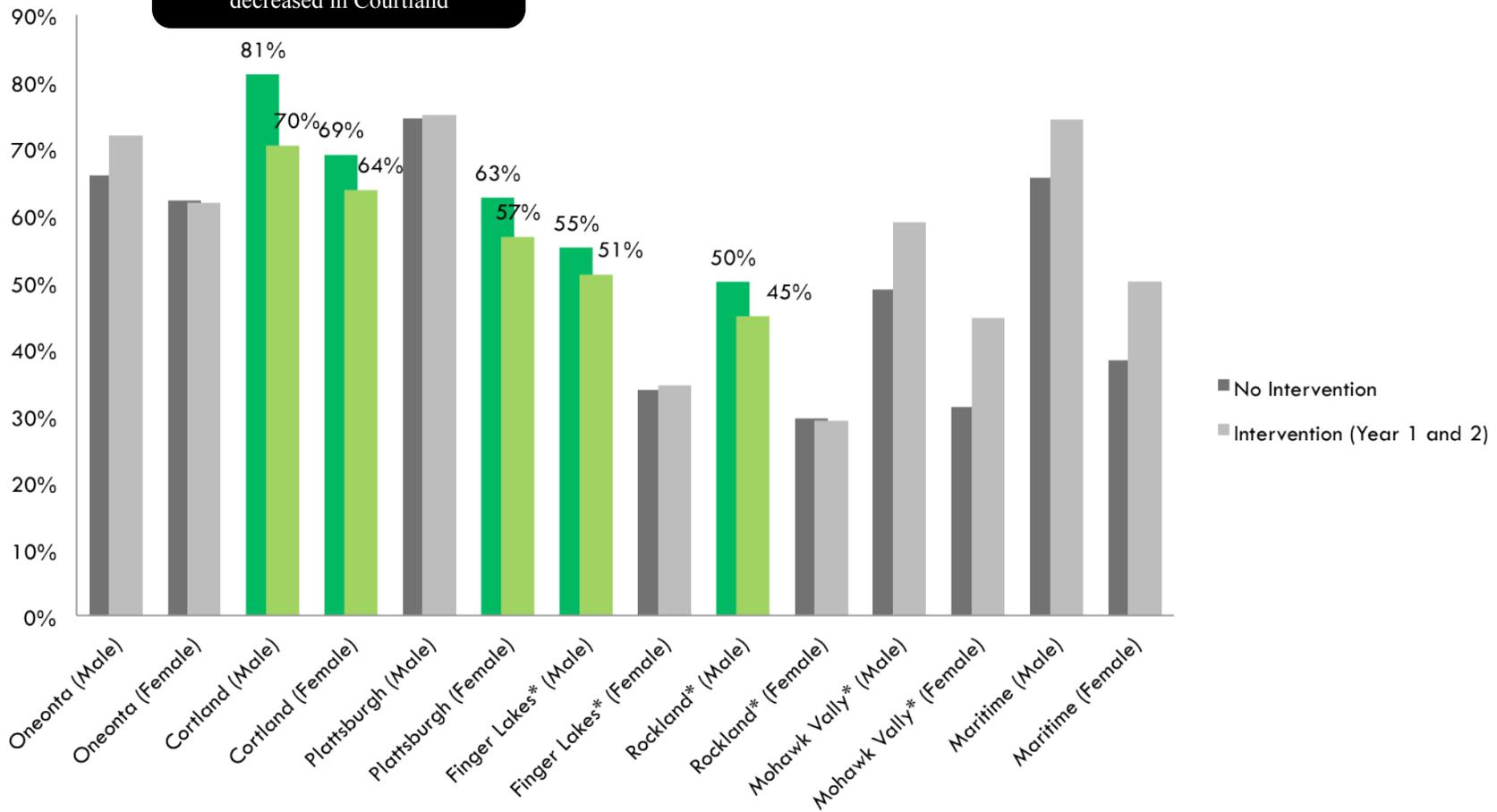
Perceived Use

Actual Use



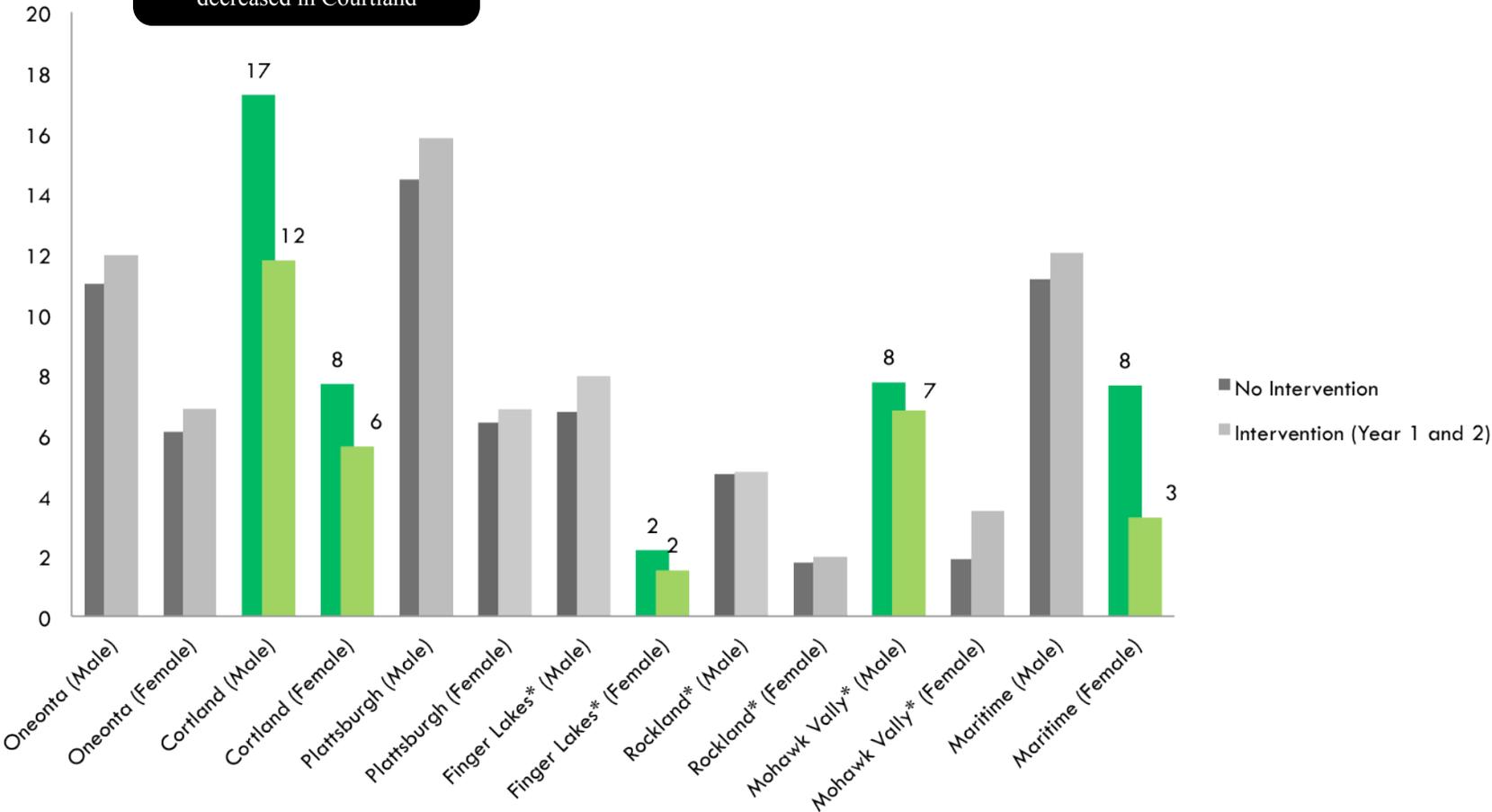
Percent Indicating Binge Drinking at Least Once During The Past Two Weeks

Both Males and Females decreased in Courtland



Average Number of Drinks During a Typical Week

Both Males and Females decreased in Courtland



Outcomes

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Denver Study

- Women experienced a 10 percent reduction in frequency of reported use
- Male alcohol consumption remained steady while males at control site increased
- Decline in perceived frequency of alcohol use among students - Women

SUNY Study

- There was no reduction in heavy use
- Males showed a slight decline in amount of use
- Higher reported awareness of messages related to lower use
- One site (Cortland) showed most consistent reductions

Challenges to Effective Social Norm Campaigns: Fidelity

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- Assessment (collection of data)
 - ▣ Research Designs
 - ▣ Cross-sectional
 - ▣ Response rates
- Selection of the normative message
 - ▣ Incongruous messaging
 - ▣ Abstinence vs. Use
- Selecting the normative delivery strategy
 - ▣ Generally not standardized
- Dosage of the message
 - ▣ Paucity of data regarding “awareness” and “believability”
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the message
 - ▣ Often without control or comparison groups – few multi-site studies
 - ▣ Failure to account for non-significant findings
 - ▣ Few, if any, replications

Challenges to Effective Social Norm Campaigns: Context

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“Norms are not separate from interaction. . . . [B]y conceiving norms as part of a locally constituted interaction order and as belonging to the cultural domain, the vibrancy and vitality of norms as they are lived can be appreciated” (Fine, 2001)

Challenges to Effective Social Norm Campaigns: Context

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□ Organizational Dynamics

▣ Resistance: Message rejection as assertion of independence from authority: Denver Study

■ Counter-claims regarding intervention Intent:

- University “PR” – Over 70%

■ Rejection of data validity

■ Low rate of “believability”

- Less than 45 percent believed reported norm – Highest disbelief among men and those in fraternities
- Less than 20 percent motivated to discuss normative messages with friends
- Less than 15 percent reported that marketed norms changed perceptions

Challenges to Effective Social Norm Campaigns: Context

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□ Institutional Environment

▣ Failure to replicate multi-site study

- “The results of the present study revealed that students attending institutions that implemented a social norms marketing (SNM) campaign did not have a lower risk of alcohol consumption relative to students attending control group institutions. Neither the treatment group nor the control group institutions showed any significant increases in student drinking. These findings stand in contrast to a previous multisite randomized trial involving 18 sites. In that study, the treatment group institutions showed relatively small changes in student drinking behavior, whereas substantial increases were seen among the control group institutions” (DeJong et al, 2009).

▣ How might the institutional environment mediate treatment effects?

Challenges to Effective Social Norm Campaigns: Context

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“We found that the density of on-premise alcohol outlets within 3 miles of campus modified the intervention effects observed in the SNMRP. Specifically, there was a significant interaction between the treatment effect and on-premise alcohol outlet density. Intervention effects were observed only among students from campuses with lower on-premise alcohol outlet density, whereas no intervention effects were observed among students from campuses with higher on-premise alcohol outlet density” (Scribner et al, 2011) .

Summary

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- Research on SNM shows inconsistent results
 - ▣ Programs can be effective but....
 - ▣ Effectiveness can be limited by problems with fidelity and context; both organizational and institutional
- Evaluation of SMN must collect broader range of data and use more sophisticated research designs
- Need for more theorizing about outcomes
 - ▣ Women often more significant outcomes
 - ▣ Change in perception without change in behavior –
 - Descriptive vs. Injunctive norms
 - Proximal vs. Distal
- Awareness, observational frequency, and believability of messages matter